



## STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: December 21, 2017

Agenda Item #:6h

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Dustin Graham, Director of Public Works

THRU: Susan Parker, Town Administrator

TITLE: **Review of Vacant Lot Ordinance 93.01**

**ATTACH: Chapter 93: Health and Sanitation: Nuisances (amended)**

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**Summary:** The vacant lot ordinance states that “a vacant lot within the Town limits shall be shrubbed down within four inches from the ground between May 1<sup>st</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup>, and September 1<sup>st</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup> each year”. There are approximately 1500 vacant lots inside the Town limits.

**Background:** The Public Works Director physically inspects every area within the Town limits to make sure they are in compliance. It takes approximately 3 to 4 days in June and 2 to 3 days in October to complete this process. He reports back to his administrative assistant who issues letters to each property owner. Staff generally sends an average of 100 letters after each inspection and it takes approximately one week to process. Staff then follows up with 3 to 4 phone calls and emails regarding the responses per day. Public Works Director then re-inspects again to see if property owners are in compliance after 30 days from letter.

A survey was done with other beach towns in the area. Only two beach towns had a vacant lot ordinance and those include Ocean Isle Beach and Holden Beach. Ocean Isle Beach restricts vegetative growth to 12 inches in height to be bush hogged and Holden Beach does not have a height restriction and only inspects if there is a citizen complaint.

**Fiscal Implication:** If the Town Council includes a third cutting it would increase workload related to inspections, re-inspections, administering notices and increase mailing expenses by one third.

**Legal Implication:** Any change will require legal review prior to adoption.,

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends amending the ordinance to remove the twice a year bush hogging on the island to restricting the vegetative height to 12 inches from April to September. Notices would be sent in response to citizen complaints. Staff would continue to enforce the current ordinance as it is written on the mainland.